



The Virginia Saltwater Review

*Plans and Statistics Department
2600 Washington Avenue, 3rd Floor
Newport News, VA 23607-0756
<http://www.mrc.virginia.gov>*

Vol. 22, No. 7
May 30, 2008

by

Department of Plans and Statistics, Fisheries Management Division

OVERVIEW

As the black drum bite begins to slow down, cobia have appeared on cue to start making the headlines. Red drum are starting to spread into the bay, with reports from buoy 16, Latimer Shoal, and Fisherman's Island. Spadefish have been sited at various hotspots, and Jerry Thrash at Queen's Creek Outfitters expects some big spadefish will be landed in the upcoming week if water temperatures continue to rise. The dolphin and tuna action is also improving off of the Virginia coast, as warmer water moves north toward Norfolk Canyon. Mixed reports on flounder, with some nice keepers weighed in, but others are still in the search mode. Croaker are here for the summer (though summer has yet to make a definitive appearance as of yet).

At press time, the forecast for the upcoming weekend was for temperatures in the 80's, southwest winds, and afternoon thunderstorms. Is summer trying to make an appearance? On the downside, there was an additional note in the forecast of a small craft advisory expected from Saturday morning through Saturday evening. We will wait and see.

In past weeks, we have provided much focus on the drum fishery, and especially the 2nd Annual Black Drum World Championship Fishing Tournament. Now, we are looking forward to the 13th Annual Jimmy Roger's Hampton Creek Cobia Tournament, to be held at the Hampton Piers in the downtown waterfront district of Hampton, June 13th and 14th. As we noted above, the cobia are starting to make an appearance, and that means this year's Cobia tournament may right in the middle of the peak Cobia bite. Last year VMRC Biological Sampling Team examined over 30 cobia through the tournament, collecting length, weight and sex information, as well as removing the otolith from the majority of fish to determine the age. The first place fish for the 2007 tournament, a mere 65 pounds, was an 8-year old female. The ages for all of the cobia sampled through the tournament ranged from 3 to 14 years. This year, the Biological Sampling Team will again be present, examining each fish for the tournament committee, and collecting vital biological information on cobia. Remember, for every cobia provided to the sampling team during the tournament, you will receive either a reward shirt or hat.

Though we know the next item is becoming repetitive, it is necessary so to insure the best available information about the red drum fishery is available. We need length data from red drum that anglers catch-and-release. In 2009, there will be a coastwide (Virginia to Florida) stock assessment of the red drum population, and information is lacking on the catch-and-release of red drum outside of the management slot limit (18 to 26 inches). You can provide length and location information through the Virginia Saltwater Fisherman's Journal (www.vasaltwaterjournal.com). See page 9 general details about the website.



THE FISHING REPORT

Chincoteague

Fish were biting at Captain Bob's this week. Those brave enough to face the wind at the Four Mouths area, near buoy 50, and the Wallops Island Bridge were bringing in nice flounder up to 24 inches. On May 24th, Robert Biggs landed a 7-pound, 10-ounce flounder (27.5 inches), and on the 25th, Juanita Bradshaw brought in a 7-pound, 2-ounce flounder (26.5 inches). In the surf, a few flounder and striped bass have been landed—the rough, cool water attracting striped bass. When the wind dies down, there are nice black sea bass to be had along the wrecks, and some tautog have been sighted in the area as well. Kingfish are beginning to show at marker 15 near the inlet, and skate and shark have been seen at the north side of Queen's Sound. The majority of the fish have been caught using a minnow and squid sandwich, but according to Donna, everyone needs a plan B—she suggests silversides. Staff at Captain Bob's believes that once the winds calm, the fishing will really pick up.

Wachapreague

Flounder were hooked near Wachapreague Marina this week. Several flounder in the 4 to 5-pound range have been landed, as well as one flounder weighing over 7 pounds. A few anglers are bringing in nice trout with their flounder catches.

At Captain Zed's, anglers are catching flounder, but they are generally hooking 20 undersized flounder for every keeper (19 inches or greater). Staff has seen a 4-pound grey trout this week.

Cape Charles

Staff at Chris' Bait and Tackle reports that black drum are still being caught at buoys 16 and 13. Red drum can be found near Latimer Shoals and Middle Ground and in the surf off of Fisherman's Island. Some trout and bluefish were caught under the lights at Kiptopeke State Park and from Morley's Wharf in Exmore. Flounder have been scarce this week, but one citation flounder, caught near Oyster, was weighed in at 8 pounds.

The bite was very slow at Cherrystone Bait and Tackle last week. Staff reports that it was an off-week for fishing but hopes that it will improve next week.

Onancock

Despite choppy conditions over the weekend, there were a lot of anglers on the water, according to Captain Wil Laaksonen of Onancock. Sea mullet are showing very well in the shallows. In fact, Captain Wil reports that sea mullet are doing better this year than he has seen in quite a while. Most of the flounder continue to be small, and few meet the 19-inch requirement. Limited striped bass are also available. He has not seen or heard reports of any sharks, but a few small trout have been reported. There is also mention of a few spot catches using bloodworms, but Captain Wil says to wait until next month for spot to really show.

Lower Bay/Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel

Spadefish were sighted this week by anglers targeting flounder, reports staff at Cobb's Marina. Several nice flounder were brought in, including an 8-pound, 10-ounce flounder landed from the 3rd island of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel on May 25th by angler James Anderson, Jr. of Norfolk. The citation flounder, which was 27.5 inches in length, was caught using minnow as bait.

While no citations were reported from Sunset Boating Center, anglers had success this weekend in the area. Striped bass were biting at the Monitor Merrimac Bridge Tunnel, flounder were found at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, and croaker were landed throughout the area.

Red drum, black drum, flounder, and tautog were reported from Salt Ponds Marina. On May 25th, a 50-inch black drum was caught at Fisherman's Island with clam and crab. Several anglers earned red drum citations fishing with crab at Fisherman's Island as well. On May 24th, a 24-inch tautog was brought in from the 3rd island of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel (this was the first tautog of the year at Salt Ponds).

Speckled trout are biting in Mobjack Bay, according to staff at the York River Fishing Center. Unfortunately, the trout are only landed when the weather permits anglers to get out and fish! Despite the weather, plenty of croaker were found off of Gloucester Point Pier. A few flounder were also hooked from the pier but all were too small to keep.

Ken Neill, reporting secretary for the Peninsula Anglers Club, contributed the following:

It is game-on now. Warm water pushed in just south of the Norfolk Canyon and it has provided some excellent tuna and dolphin fishing for Virginia's anglers. A bit to our south, there have been some impressive bigeye tuna catches out of Oregon Inlet. If all of the tuna and dolphin are not providing enough action for you, the offshore bottom fish are there to provide some exercise. Tilefish and grouper are biting well off of Virginia and North Carolina. Spadefish are biting at the Chesapeake Light Tower and nearby wrecks. Cobia have arrived in the bay, and, as usual, the first fish have been caught by anglers targeting drum. They have been catching them in numbers off of Hatteras. Cobia catches in the Bay will increase as more anglers begin to target them this coming weekend. We had a surprise cobia visit out at the Norfolk Canyon this past weekend. It came up to look at us while we were catching grouper. Both red and black drum continue to be caught in good numbers and sizes. The run of big black drum seems to have slowed a little but action is still very good. A few large gray trout are around. The Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and the Cell are your

best locations to have a chance at a large tide-runner trout. Earlier this month, a monster gray trout was caught to our north. That fish was pushing 20 pounds, so there still are some big trout around. Large speckled trout have been caught inside Back River and up on Poquoson Flats. Keeper-sized rockfish are being caught at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and at the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel. Some nice flounder are being caught but action has been sporadic. Some big flatfish have been caught at 36A and at the Cell.

Dr. Julie Ball, IGFA International Representative for Virginia Beach, contributed the following:

The prelude to the summer fishing pattern is right on target with the arrival of one of the most anticipated warm water residents, the cobia. Scattered hookups and confirmed sightings around the lower Bay are just the beginning as these covert hunters quietly glide into local waters. Sheephead are also making a low-key debut, as occasional reports trickle in of incidental hook-ups by drum anglers, which is common for this time of year.

Although not off the charts as it was mid-month, the drum action has returned to a more normal pattern, which is still very good. Regardless of the state of the bite, anglers are out in droves hoping for a chance to tangle with a big drum. Black drum are still showing along the shoals near buoys 10, 13, and 16 where chowder clams and sea clams are the top baits. Although we are on the downward trend for these brutes from the shoals, they are still available in these areas for those willing to put in the time. Huge red drum are still scavenging the shoals off Fisherman's Island and Nautilus Shoal, but more fish are now showing on the nine foot shoal near the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Blue crab has worked well all season.

Spadefish are appearing on inshore wrecks, as well inside the Bay at York Spit Light, Wolftrap Light and the Cell, but we still need to inch up a few more degrees for the action to really take off. Some spades are also available at the Chesapeake Light Tower, but the fish are holding tight to the tower legs. A few boats worked hard to catch some respectable fish, but most are small, with the best yet to come with the spadefish.

Flounder action is still frustrating anglers, with muddy conditions keeping the water less than optimal for these aggressive sight feeders. Most anglers who are catching decent fish are finding their keepers in protected waters such as the back waters of Wachapreague and Oyster, and within both Rudee and Lynnaven inlets. One angler found a 6-pound, 4-ounce flattie laying in waiting while casting from the shore within Long Creek recently. The best flounder bite is occurring on the flood tide this week.

Striped bass are making up for the flounder shortage, with catches of rockfish to 36-inches coming from the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel and the small boat channel and islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Live baiting over the tubes is providing the best striper hauls, with both croaker and eels working well. Snapper bluefish are everywhere in local waters, which often makes catching anything else a challenge.

Croaker are active within the tributary rivers, with the York River the best location. Squid and

shrimp get the nod this week. Bait-sized hard heads are also still available off Little Creek Inlet and along the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel. A few speckled trout and bluefish are biting within Rudee Inlet, where folks fishing from the jetties are scoring with smoke and green colored grubs. A few grey trout up to 3 pounds are lurking around the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel where catches are sporadic, but the grey action is still good around the Concrete ships and the docks at the Kiptopeke State Park ramp.

The deep dropping scene is on fire if you want to fit the fuel bill to make the long run out to 50 fathoms or more. Those boats making a go are rewarded with excellent catches of blueline and golden tilefish, grouper, blackbelly rosefish, and jumbo black sea bass. Sean Doran and Darren Foster expertly guided their crew to the deep aboard the CRYSTAL CLEAR, and loaded up with super-sized grouper, blueline tilefish, and golden tiles weighing up to nearly 50-pounds! A nice 18-pound, 12-ounce blueline tilefish landed by Dr. Julie Ball while fishing squid near the Norfolk Canyon took the state lead this week.

The offshore trolling scene is just getting rolling, with gaffer-sized dolphin and nice yellowfin tuna stealing the glory. Boats are also finding a smattering of mako sharks and wahoo in the mix. This trend will only improve, as long as the warm water stays around. For more info, go to www.drjball.com.

Virginia Middle Bay

The croaker bite is on in this area of the Chesapeake Bay. Jett's hardware reported a 2.9-pound croaker caught around Smith Point and a few striped bass running around buoy 62.

Smith Point Marina reports striped bass up to 32 inches (caught while chumming) north and south of Smith Point. In addition, they have seen the croaker bite picking up with some small spot mixed in. Keeper flounder (19 inches or greater) are also being caught around the Smith Point Jetties.

Locklies Marina reported good croaker action as well, and a few flounder being landed.

Garrett's Marina also saw a large number of croaker being caught, with one weighing in at 3.2 pounds.

Jerry Thrash, of Queen's Creek Outfitters, contributed the following:

Spadefish have been seen on the Cell and at Wolftrap all week but have been refusing baits. This is normal, and usually they start biting about a week after first being sited. We should see big Spades this week!

Speckled Trout fishing continues to be hot! We registered seven more citation specks this week, all from the North and East Rivers.

Croaker are available at Butlers Hole in the Rappahannock, in the mouth of the Piankatank and in surrounding creeks. Croaker are also showing in fair numbers across the Bay in the Buoy 40A area where many of the charter boats are fishing when winds permit.

One 9-pound citation flounder was weighed this week near Buoy 42 but there were very few boats on the water Saturday and Sunday.

Virginia Beach

According to staff at the Virginia Beach Fishing Center, tuna fishing has been productive this week. While there are no citations yet, anglers are having luck with yellowfin tuna. Inshore, boats are reporting nice catches of croaker and black sea bass. Black drum, red drum, and striped bass are being landed in the Chesapeake Bay. Spadefish have also been sighted at the Tower and at the Sandbridge Pier. Numerous flounder, bluefish, and puppy drum (juvenile red drum) were seen in Rudee Inlet.

Memorial Day weekend fishing was successful at Fisherman's Wharf Marina. Offshore boats reported yellowfin tuna, numerous bluefin tuna releases, and gaffer dolphin. Two citation-sized dolphin were reported (49.5 pounds and 26 pounds), and several others were reported that just missed the citation size of 25 pounds. Most of the fishing occurred around the 400-line. Boats deep-dropping offshore also did well with tilefish and grouper. Inshore, there was less action. A few anglers went out targeting spadefish, though it is still early for these fish.

Virginia Piers

At the Ocean View Pier this week, anglers have caught numerous croaker and sea mullet. A few anglers have hooked flounder, but all have been too small to keep.

At the Lynnhaven Pier, sea mullet and croaker are biting well at night. Spot and bluefish are biting off and on, and a few striped bass and very small flounder have been hooked, but no keepers have been found recently. Most of the notable fishing has been at night from just after dark until early morning.

According to staff at the Virginia Beach Pier, there was little action this weekend. Sea mullet have been pulled in, and small spot and bluefish are being landed. Small flounder are biting, but nothing of regulation size has been brought in.

At the Sandbridge Pier, whiting and a few skate are being hooked. Over the weekend, anglers caught bluefish and spadefish. Staff reports that fishing has been slow lately.

Outer Banks, NC

The weather and fish finally decided to coordinate, and the result was some great fishing for the Memorial Day weekend. In the surf, water temperatures continued to rise into the mid-60's, and the weather forecast for the coming week looks like we are going to see some hot fishing action.

People fishing from the Avalon Pier were rewarded with plenty of bluefish in the 2- to 3-pound range; however, the runs were sporadic, so persistence definitely paid off. Speckled trout were also available in good numbers but without the bursts of activity the bluefish were showing. Other species caught with less regularity included silver perch, spot, sea mullet, and cobia.

Anglers fishing inside the sounds and inlets were targeting speckled trout and red drum. The best spots for these species were around the Melvin Daniels Bridge and Washington Baum Bridge. Striped bass improved over the last week with Mann's Harbor yielding the bulk of the catches. Black drum, croaker, and sea mullet were scattered, and sheepshead and triggerfish were around the bridge pilings, mainly at night.

Offshore fishing activity, out of Oregon Inlet, has progressed with improving weather. Gaffer dolphin, yellowfin tuna in the 30- to 50-pound range, and big eye tuna over 100 pounds were being caught. A blue marlin release was also reported. Closer to shore, Spanish mackerel and a few cobia were caught.

Sea mullet, bluefish, and Spanish mackerel were caught in the surf south of Oregon Inlet last weekend. The sea mullet were frequenting the ramp 44 area with a few citation-sized ones mixed in as well. The big news was a 97-pound cobia being caught from the surf at ramp 49—a rare sight!

Offshore fishing from Hatteras Inlet provided great dolphin action with yellowfin tuna, wahoo, and amberjack showing as well. Billfish made their presence known on Sunday with numerous blue marlin, white marlin, and sailfish hooked. Inshore fishing was also productive with Spanish mackerel, puppy drum (juvenile red drum), bluefish, and cobia landed.

If you have additional information or would like further details contact Joe Grist at (757) 247-2237.












Please credit the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's THE SALTWATER REVIEW as the source of the fishing information.

**THE VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION
WANTS YOUR FISH....
TO MEASURE AND AGE.**

You catch it, you fillet it,
**but instead of throwing the remains in the trash,
please donate them to science.**



The Marine Sportfish Collection Project will focus on species of fish that are difficult to collect through the agency's normal sampling program. Anglers are asked to donate their filleted carcasses (head and tail intact) of legal and fresh-caught:

COBIA		RED DRUM	
SHEEPSHEAD		BLACK DRUM	
SPADEFISH		TAUTOG	
TILEFISH		GROUPE	
KING MACKEREL		SPANISH MACKEREL	
BLUEFISH (OVER 16 POUNDS OR 36 INCHES)			

In return for participating in the project, the agency will provide a **ONE FREE PROJECT TEE SHIRT or HAT FOR EACH PARTICIPANT, PER MONTH.**

Please visit these bait and tackle merchants to participate:

Bell Isle Marine (Hampton)

Chris' Bait and Tackle (Capeville)

Long Bay Pointe Marina (Virginia Beach)

Wachapreague Marina

Morningstar Marina – Gwynn's Island (formerly known as the Gwynn's Island Boatel)



Website: http://mrc.virginia.gov/rec_assessment/index.shtm

As of 05/16/2008



ATTENTION: VIRGINIA SALTWATER JOURNAL WEBSITE HAS BEEN UPDATED!

You will now be able to report catch-and-release ranges, in addition to individual fish kept or released. Staff has updated the website to include this expanded tool, so on those days that you catch-and-release 50 bluefish, you can just report the 50 caught and a range of lengths. But remember, for more high profile species, such as Red Drum, Striped Bass, and Flounder (to name a few), individual measurements on caught and released fish places a greater value on the data you are providing.

WWW.VASALTWATERJOURNAL.COM

Fisherman's Journal - Mozilla Firefox

File Edit View History Bookmarks Yahoo! Tools Help

Address: https://192.168.0.15/vasalwaterjournal/journal_entry.php

Search: Google

Virginia Marine Resour... mafmc.htm SAFMC New Site > Ho... NOAA Home Page Atlantic States Marine ... Striped Bass Charter B... CFLS Virginia Marine Resou... Recreational Fishing O... Welcome to ACCSP

Launch site information Name:

Identification of **launch site** will allow fishery managers to evaluate and update the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS) site register and thereby improve the data collected by the angler interviews.

Weather:

Seas:

Wind Speed:

Wind Direction:

Time of Day:

Moon Phase:

Air Temp (F):

Water Temp (F):

Number of Anglers Reporting For:

Hours Fished:

Notes:

To record your fish, click the "Add Fish" button below for each fish you intend to record. Record lengths in decimal format for partial inches (ex. 33.25). Total length is measured in a straightline from tip of nose to tip of tail. If you would like to make your catch data available to other anglers, ensure 'Make Public' is checked. To make your catch information only accessible to you(private), uncheck 'Make Public'. All catch data, both public and private, will be analyzed in aggregate by the VMRC and will never be associated with the individual angler.

Record Your Catch

*** Required Fields: Species, Qty, Length (Minimum length for released fish), Catch**

You may enter a size range for released fish. The minimum length is required. For kept fish, the length is required.

(1) Kept Fish

*Species: *Qty: *Length(inches): Weight(lb):

Method: Bait: Tide: ☒ Make Public

(2) Released Fish

*Species: *Qty: Enter Length Range *Min Length(inches): Max Length(inches):

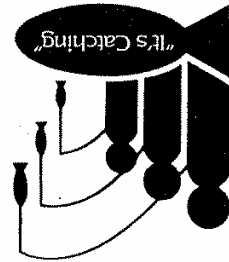
Method: Bait: Tide: ☒ Make Public

Done

start Inbox - Microsoft ... RE: New poster - ... RE: New poster - ... Fisherman's Journ... 2 Windows Explorer Microsoft Offic... SAS - [Output - (U... 192.168.0.15 2:25 PM

FIRST CLASS MAIL

TAKE A FRIEND FISHING



FISHERIES PLANS/STATISTICS OFFICE
VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION
2600 WASHINGTON AVE., 3RD FLOOR
NEWPORT NEWS, VIRGINIA 23607

Practice

CAREFUL CATCH

REDUCE STRESS FACTORS THAT KILL FISH

Exhaustion * Loss of Slime * Wounds * Time out of Water